

LADIES OF CHARITY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA® SERVICETTE

"To serve rather than to be served"



AIC USA®
VOL. 54, Nº4
DECEMBER 2015

A PILGRIMAGE TO MEET POPE FRANCIS

Constance O'Brien



Connie (L) and Mary Beth O'Brien

I represent the Ladies of Charity as a Participating Observer on the Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) Board. Through this connection I was able to attend the Canonization Mass of Blessed Junipero Serra in Washington, DC, in September. Pope Francis presided at the Mass. My mother Mary Beth O'Brien, past president of LCUSA, accompanied me; we were part of a larger group of board members and local agency directors from across the country. We also had the chance to attend the reception on the White House lawn prior to the Mass. It was truly an incredible experience!

The White House reception was our Holy Father's arrival ceremony. Historically, heads of state and government were simply met at the airport, but President Kennedy's administration brought the arrival ceremony to the south lawn of the White House. My mom and I boarded a bus very

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ALL IS GIFT

A Witness to Peace: A Multi-Religious Gathering with Pope Francis on Sept. 25, 2015

Mary Ann Dantuono

Holding a recently gifted ticket to Pope Francis' address to the United Nations, I was ecstatic. On the afternoon before, the phone rang. Again it was the Holy See Mission to the U.N. asking if I would accept a ticket to the World Trade Center (WTC) event. I was a bit reluctant to give up my ticket to the U.N. speech, but with the thought that "all is gift," accepted.



As the evening progressed so did a feeling that I had made a serious error in giving up my seat at the UN. The email containing the promised instructions did not arrive. The event listing was ambiguous "Prayer at the South Pool of the 9-11 Memorial" and the "Multi-Religious Gathering at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, World Trade Center." The events merged as I listened to the media anticipate the Pope's meeting with families of the victims of 9-11, followed by the prayer service. I "assumed" that guests who were not family members of victims or first responders

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The **SERVICETTE** is a publication of the Association of the Ladies of Charity as a record of their activities in the USA

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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide Vincentian leadership to women acting together against all forms of poverty.

VISION STATEMENT

LCUSA-AIC provides Vincentian leadership of transformation assisting persons who are vulnerable to move from marginalization and despair to participation and hope.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

Individual members are supportive of the mission and purpose of LCUSA and participate in the ministry of the Ladies of Charity by prayer and/or service and pay dues prescribed by the board of directors.



SERVICETTE NEWS DEADLINE

The deadline to submit articles and photos for the Summer issue of the **SERVICETTE**:

Monday, February 1

Articles and photos can be sent by e-mail to: kathleen.sieracki@gmail.com
Articles and photos should be sent separately and not within the text document.

Please contact us for info.



Francis: Pope and Pastor

Bishop David A. Zubik
Episcopal Chairman

It was this past July and it was the last major event before Pope Francis would end his weeklong trip back home to South America. He was at the waterfront of Asunción, Paraguay, with some young friends, about 220,000 of them.

The Holy Father had abandoned his formal text—he does that often, particularly when he speaks to youth—and made his comments based on the testimonials of some young people. One young woman named Liz had told him that she had put her life on hold to care for her mother suffering from the early onset of dementia.

“Liz is fulfilling the fourth commandment,” Pope Francis told the young people, “setting aside her own life in the service of her mother.” This is a sign, a witness, the Holy Father said, of solidarity, service and love.

He then led the crowd in a cheer of gratitude—“Thank you, Lord!”—for

those who dedicate themselves with God’s help to service, solidarity, hope and freedom of heart. Throughout his remarks, Pope Francis urged the young people to repeat his words. “A free heart!” and they would chant back to him, 220,000 strong, “A free heart!” “Knowing God, my strength!” and they would chant back to him, “Knowing God, my strength!”

As I read the reports of the Holy Father’s evening with the young people, I couldn’t help but think of the word “pastoral.” Pastoral is a word we bounce around a lot. It has a hundred different secular meanings. In a general, secular way, the word suggests lyrically, idyllically, the life of shepherds, guiding, leading and guarding their sheep. Pope Francis is always pastoral. He is always giving firm spiritual guidance. He is always calling each of us to conversion and action.

“We don’t want young people who tire easily,” the Holy Father told those 220,000 in Paraguay, “young people who are tired and have bored faces. We want young people with hope and strength. But that means sacrifice and swimming against the tide.”

In the footsteps of Pope Francis, that is what we are called to achieve too! That’s being pastoral—truly and faithfully pastoral.





Servant Leader

Mary Ann Dantuono
LCUSA President

"The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping."

Suzanne Johnson and I attended a meeting of the leaders of Vincentian groups in North America in late October. At our meeting we reflected on "The Francis Effect and Our Call as Vincentians." The group reflections focused on the Pope's concerns regarding the environment and poverty, economic inequality, and the call for a "culture of care."

Our deliberations led to a group commitment to deepen our concern for people who are poor, raising awareness of their needs, and collaboration to increase efforts to creatively alleviate the conditions that they suffer as well as the systemic conditions that cause that suffering. We also seek ways to encourage youth leaders within the Vincentian Family.

On the way home from Denver, I began to reflect on Vincentian leadership and Pope Francis as a moral leader and servant leader. Francis brought hope to many. The enthusiasm around his historic visit to the United States, reminded me of a line from *Gaudium et Spes*, "The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping." (31)

Pope Francis is a strong leader. But his leadership is not about power. Like St. Vincent and St. Louise, Francis' leadership is about service, compassion, reconciliation and hope. He strives for relationships and respects the dignity of all. He balances his time with the powerful leaders of our world, nation and church with people who are homeless, in prison and vulnerable. He articulates the values and positions of the Church, but does not put anyone or their ideas down. He calls attention to evils and is optimistic that positive solutions are possible. He sees faces, not numbers, when he approaches a problem. He listens to others—wants to know their names, their stories and is moved by them. He calls for dialogue, born from an attitude of respect for the other person. He stands in opposition to "every attempt to create a rigid uniformity," but seeks "to build unity on the basis of our diversity of languages, cultures and religions." He seeks to be a force for reconciliation, peace and

justice. All he does is rooted in prayer.

In Pope Francis we can see the "effect" of a true "Servant Leader." Servant leadership is a philosophy and practice that was coined by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s and has been in wide use in management theory. According to Greenleaf, "The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the 'top of the pyramid,' servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible." <https://greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>

Ladies of Charity are servant leaders in our communities. May the "Francis Effect" encourage, affirm and challenge all of us to deepen our commitment to serve and to lead.

During the season of Christmas, may our hearts be open to recognize God continuing to birth love in us and may people who are poor, frail or oppressed benefit from God with us and in us.

May you and your family enjoy Christmas Blessings and a New Year of hope, justice and peace.

ADVOCACY CONNECTIONS

The Pundits are coming! The Pundits are coming!

Irene Frechette (SVDP & LCUSA)

The 2016 elections are just 12 months away and the candidates (pundits) are vying for our attention. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary a pundit is a person who (thinks) they know a lot about a particular subject and who expresses ideas and opinions about that subject publicly (such as by speaking on television and radio shows).

My question is what can one person (YOU & I) do to influence the upcoming elections?

Let's look at that question.

How do we as Vincentians and people who are not (neces-

sarily) living in poverty make our voices heard?

I will make a bold assumption that a majority of Vincentians are registered voters. Therefore we can head to the voting booth and mark our ballots for the candidates that most nearly reflect our ideas and opinions!

Can we say that about the people that we serve? Are they registered to vote?

Are they standing up for themselves and asking why they are still living near and below the poverty line?

How many of our Vincentian groups are organizing a voter registration event?

How many of our Vincentian groups have voter registration cards in their thrift stores, food kitchens and pantries?

How many of our Vincentian Home Visitors are dropping

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Ladies of Charity at the Vincentian Family Gathering

Vincentian Spirit Soars

Kitty Prager

The Vincentian Family of North America Gathering took place October 23rd-25th in Denver. A capacity crowd of two hundred and thirty people from every corner of Canada and the United States came together to participate in a weekend centered on homelessness. Representatives of each branch of the Vincentian Family, including 12 Ladies of Charity, prayed, shared and learned. One third of the participants were young people, representing Vincentian Volunteers, lay missionaries and students at the various Vincentian universities. Presentations featured reflection on the words and lives of our founders, initiatives being employed by member groups and breakout discussions providing extensive opportunities to think about changing structures that contribute to and exacerbate homelessness throughout the United States and Canada.

The weekend began with a new participants' orientation session that delineated the Vincentian "Family Tree." The opening prayer service was led by the young adult members of the leadership team and was followed by an evening session at which teams played "The Game of Life" and experienced

a sense of the random events that push people into poverty and homelessness. The evening also afforded ample time for meeting and socializing with old and new friends. Mary Ann Dantuono and Gayle Johnson hosted a lovely reception for the Ladies of Charity and this gave the attendees an opportunity to meet, put faces to names and discuss some of the projects pertinent to the Ladies of Charity USA. Saturday began with prayer and a keynote by Mary and Mike McManus, former Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, who shared their hope and struggles as they continue to live a life of service. A period of reflection which centered on Pope Francis' writings helped one process the ideas that had been encountered. The afternoon was dedicated to an array of speakers from De Paul International and a session on restorative justice. A productive post-session discussion was followed by a beautiful Mass.

The weekend moved on quickly and Sunday morning began with a prayer service before the final keynote address by Sr. Vicki Perkins of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth who addressed the organization and implementation of transitional housing in Leavenworth, Kansas. Participants had a chance to discuss next steps and express thoughts on where the family needs to go next. Proposals regarding future subcommittees in such areas as policy, media and education were presented. The final speaker before the closing prayer service was Fr. Joe Agostino, CM, Coordinator of the Vincentian Family Office, who discussed resources, services and leadership training offered through their team, including their willingness to go on-site to help members achieve goals and acquire the skills necessary to sustain projects. Sr. Teresa Koutturan, SCN, a non-governmental organization representative of the Federation of the Sisters of Charity at the United Nations, called on us to continue our great calling to be inspired voices for the poor throughout the world.

In this year dedicated to deepening understanding of our Vincentian charism and expanding collaboration, the gathering certainly proved ripe ground for connecting, celebrating and fostering ways for groups to serve together. As participants



One third of the participants at the Vincentian Family Gathering were youth.

exchanged information, ideas percolated and a palpable energy was constant throughout the weekend. The Ladies of Charity maintained a table in the exhibition room and this provided an opportunity to share our history and special role within the larger Family. There was great interest and many questions answered. President Mary Ann Dantuono did a wonderful job engaging young women from the various volunteer and university groups and helped them see our goal of providing Vincentian leadership to end poverty. Kudos to all the Ladies for the outreach they did and the great effort made to both identify partner projects and proffer existing ones.

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Celebrating the Year of Vincentian Collaboration

Rev. Joseph V. Agostino, CM, Coordinator, Vincentian Family Office

On May 24, 2015, the Vincentian Family began to celebrate a “Year of Collaboration” which extends from Pentecost Sunday 2015 to Pentecost Sunday 2016. This is a time for the Vincentian Family to rediscover the fact that collaboration is a constitutive part of our Vincentian charism. There are three primary objectives for this year:

1. Celebrate: the Vincentian Family is invited to gather locally or regionally at three times during the year to pray and reflect on our charism.
 - i. Pentecost 2015: a moment to thank God for both our Family’s presence in an area as well as for the gifts we bring to our works.
 - ii. Feast of St. Vincent de Paul 2015: we reflect on the effectiveness of our collaborative efforts and discern how we might best continue to respond to the needs of those in poverty.
 - iii. Pentecost 2016: we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recommit ourselves in our collaborative ministries for and with those whom we serve.
2. Connect and Learn: every Monday FamVin.org (as well as our “Vincentian Collaboration” page on Facebook) features a different branch of the Vincentian Family. In coming to know one another we begin to establish a foundation for future collaborations.
3. Service: at least once a month, across all media, we highlight a collaborative project undertaken by the Vincentian Family. They are presented as “best practices” meant to stimulate further collaborations throughout the Family.

Why a Year of Collaboration? First, it helps us remain faithful to our identity. No single branch of the Family expresses the entirety of the Vincentian charism. No one branch is the only way or the privileged path by which one can follow Jesus

Christ. Only together do we begin to reflect the richness of St. Vincent’s charism, like the many facets of a fine diamond. Only together can we hope to maximize our impact in the struggle against all forms of poverty.

Second, it deepens our relationship with Jesus and one another. We recognize that the disciples were sent forth two by two so that their faith would not waver and they would be mutually supported. Likewise, with one another, we commit ourselves more deeply to Christ, the head of the Church and Family. Thus we are better positioned to listen to how the Holy Spirit wishes us to respond to the challenges of poverty today.

There are many tools available to help us make this a memorable year! FamVin.org, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are accessible to everyone. In addition (from January 28–31, 2016), the Vincentian Family in the Philadelphia region will be offering a formation program, the “Vincentian Family Collaborative Action Program” or VFCAP. This experience develops the human, psychological, and spiritual elements of Vincentian collaboration. If anyone wishes to participate or would like more information about future gatherings in your area, please contact Mike Clark at clarkm3ster@gmail.com.

As we prepare to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism, as well as the beginnings of the AIC, let us pray that through the intercession of Sts. Vincent, Louise, and our Holy Founders, we may experience a new birth in our zeal for the evangelization and service of persons living in poverty, our Lords and Masters.



Fr. Joseph Agostino

Advocacy Connections *Continued from page 3*

off voter registration cards with the resource guides that they bring with the bag of food? If not, why not?

We hold informational gatherings in our homes and invite candidates to explain what they stand for, but are we asking the right questions?

Are we asking them what they are doing to alleviate poverty?

Are we asking them about the legislation that they sponsored in the last legislative session and whether it did anything to assist people living near and below the poverty level?

What does the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops say?

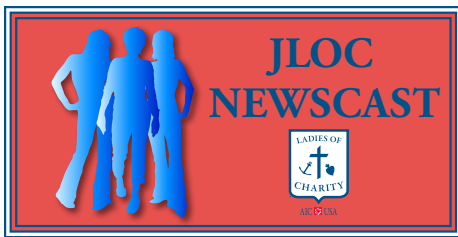
Catholic Social Teaching on the “Call to Family, Community & Participation” states that, “We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society seeking together the common good and well being of all, especially the poor and the vulnerable.”

Let them hear “The cry of the poor.”

Candidates running for local, state and federal positions are looking for our votes.

Let’s hold our informational gatherings at soup kitchens and thrift stores.

What can one person do? One person can start a movement! One person can ask “What are YOU doing to alleviate poverty?” and mark their ballots accordingly!



Reflections of a Junior Lady of Charity

My name is Mary Fritz, and I am a senior at the Academy of the Holy Names in Albany, N. Y. My sister Maggie and I have been a part of the Troy Chapter of the Junior Ladies of Charity for the past five years, and I can confidently say that being a part of this organization has enhanced my life in ways I never thought imaginable.

I first became involved with the Junior Ladies of Charity (JLOC) in 2010. A neighbor of mine, who at the time was an officer of the group, told my sister and me that we would be great additions to the Junior Ladies of Charity. I was originally hesitant, as I had never heard of the group, and had no idea what to expect. However, upon arriving at our first meeting, I saw how passionate everyone was about their service, and immediately decided that it was something I wanted to pursue.

Since our first meeting as skeptical middle school students, Maggie and I have each taken leadership positions among the group. This year I was elected President, and my sister was elected Secretary. Our group has remained small over the years, consisting of about twenty-five girls, but I would not want it any other way. My Junior Ladies group has become a second family, and my JLOC friends are some of my closest friends today.

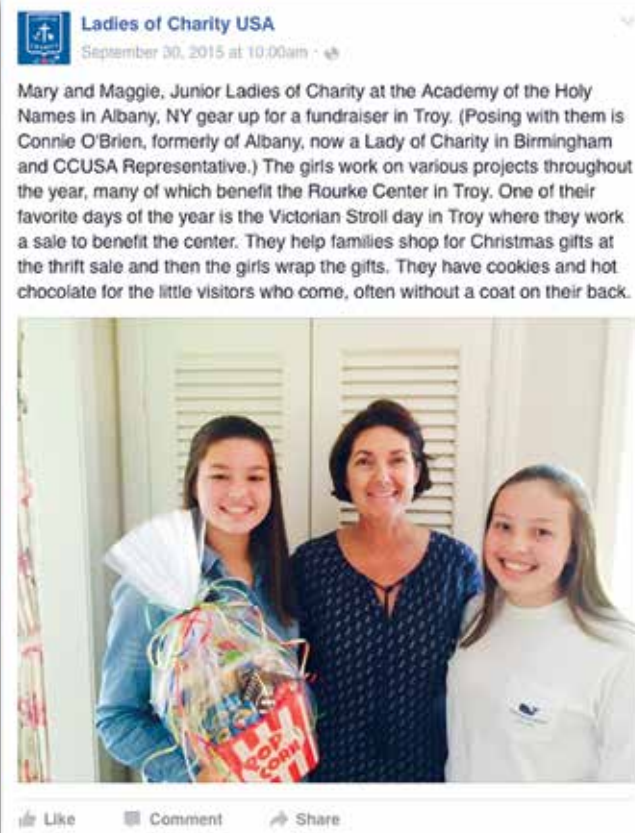
Once a month, usually on a Sunday afternoon, we all come together for a meeting, to discuss future service opportunities, fundraising ideas, and retreats for our

group. However, we remain active in the community with our service year round. Some of our most recent acts of service include participating in a Bead For Life Fundraiser directly benefiting the poor women of Uganda, donating Thanksgiving dinners to Sacred Heart Parish of Troy, sending funds to Catholic Sr. Mary Felice working in the Congo, and collecting items such as canned goods, winter coats, and school supplies, to be donated to drives taking place all over the community. We are able to fund these service projects through a number of fundraisers, such as selling raffle tickets for themed gift baskets put together by our group, and by hosting parish bake sales.

One of my favorite events of the year is the Victorian Stroll in Troy, which takes place in early December. Each year, our JLOC group volunteers at the Roarke Center, a Catholic outreach center in downtown Troy, during its Victorian Stroll event. The basket seen in the picture is a Movie Night themed basket, and was one of two baskets our group put together for the event. The basket will be raffled off at the Roarke Center, and all of the proceeds will benefit the shelter. Besides the raffle taking place, many people come in to purchase donated and used items



Maggie Fritz (L), Alexandra Daily and Isabella Comstantakes are Junior Ladies of Charity in Troy, N.Y.



Mary Fritz (L), LCUSA Board Member Connie O'Brien, and Maggie Fritz with a gift basket prepared for the Victorian Stroll.

as Christmas gifts for their friends and family. This event is a perfect way to get into the true Christmas spirit, by giving our time and efforts to those who are less fortunate.

While service is an extremely significant aspect of our group, the importance of a strong faith is also very much emphasized. The Catholic identity of the group is felt through events such as our May Crowning of Mother Mary, our annual retreat, and by having a number of Catholic speakers come to talk to us about the importance of our faith as young women. One of my favorite traditions is picking our monthly Prayer Partners, which is a practice that the Ladies of Charity in Troy have now adopted. Every month, we draw names randomly out of a box, and the name you pick becomes your Prayer Partner, whom you are responsible

for praying for over the course of that month.

The motto of the Junior Ladies of Charity is “To Serve Rather Than Be Served.” This is a phrase that my group has wholeheartedly embodied throughout the years, as we have given of ourselves so generously in service to others. However, I feel that this organization has served me in a number of ways that I never thought possible. Being a Junior Lady of Charity has allowed me to realize the gifts I have been given, and how to use them in a way that will positively impact others. I learned how to become a leader through this organization, and I have gained life skills throughout my time as a Junior Lady that will serve me in all of my future endeavors. My faith has undoubtedly become stronger over the past five years, as surrounding myself with religious role models, like our group’s moderator, Mrs. Kehn, who has provided the perfect environment for my faith to flourish. **I have found that by simply giving of my time and talents to someone that needs it, I am able change not only their life, but also my own.** I hope that other young women across the country have the opportunity to be a part of a group like this, where your faith can further develop, your talents and gifts can be put to the best of your ability, and you can see firsthand the influence you can have on your community. Service is not a chore; it is not something people my age should feel obligated to do just for a resume or school requirement. Service is something that should not only benefit the community, but also have lasting impacts on those who perform the service, as it has for me.

As I prepare for my last year as a Troy Junior Lady before heading off to college, I feel a huge sense of despair. This organization has been the most influential aspect of my life over the past five years, and it is something that I do not want to lose touch with as I start the next chapter in my life. My hope is that, come the fall, I can become involved with, or even start, a Ladies of Charity group at the place I will call home for the next four years.



St. John's Serves Kitty Prager

Each year St. John's University celebrates its Vincentian roots during Founders Week, which culminates with her joining the world-wide Vincentian Family who commemorate the Sept. 27 feast day of St. Vincent de Paul by engaging in a day of prayer and service. In the metro New York City area, several thousand students and alumni worked at over 150 sites making a difference in the lives of many.

Junior Ladies of Charity from St. John's Preparatory School, accompanied by classmates, joined the university group in a day of service at St. Joachim and Anne's Nursing Home in Coney

Above: Group sing-a-long during the nursing home visit

Island, Brooklyn. In the morning the group visited and chatted with residents and then played board games and Trivial Pursuit. After a stroll on the boardwalk, Prep students and members of the University's Sunday Choir performed a concert and sing-a-long, a joyful presentation enjoyed by both the performers and the audience.

St. John's Prep was founded by the Congregation of the Mission in 1870. Located in Astoria, N.Y., the Prep embraces the Vincentian charism of humility, simplicity and charity. The Junior Ladies of Charity were eager participants in the day of service, and some of the girls are considering visiting the nursing home on a regular basis.



Kitty Prager, at left in the middle row, led a group of JLOC and friends on a day of service.

SIGN-UP FOR CAPWIZ

Join the Legislative Network of the Vincentian Family.

Sign up as a Lady of Charity

<http://www.capwiz.com/svdpusa/mlm/signup/>

All is Gift

Continued from page 1, right

would be in the rear. Like Zaccheus, (Luke 19:4), I would probably need to “climb a tree” to see anything. I packed opera glasses and decided on comfortable shoes. As we said goodnight, I told my husband “This is not going well. I think I may have lost out on seeing the Pope by accepting this last minute change.”

When I awoke at about 4 a.m., I printed the email instructions that had arrived overnight. Serendipitously parking my car in spot 911 at the railroad station began to focus the day, but I was still anticipating a distant view.

After waiting on line for about an hour with nearly two thousand people, I presented my ID and was given my ticket. I followed Bishops Hubbard and Scharfenberger of Albany through the scanners and into the WTC museum. Most of the people on line were going to the left, toward the reflecting pools. After greeting the bishops from my own diocese, I asked a gentlemen wearing a badge to explain the “plan.” He replied, “You can tour the museum until 10 a.m., then take your seat,” gesturing to the 400 chairs set in front of a stage. I now noted that the ticket “reserved” Sec. C, Row F, Seat 1. I did not need a “sycamore tree” or the opera glasses.

I was in awe as the “guests” took their seats for the service. Well-dressed men in suits and yarmulkes, women wearing hijabs and men in kufis and turbans, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bishops in cassocks, Native Americans, Buddhists and Hindus, all wearing some sign of their religious identity. I wore the Ladies of Charity USA pin proudly on my lapel.

After the dignitaries were seated, the Pope entered to the clicks of cameras and applause. Then a deep silence enveloped the gathering. From that silence came meditations read in English and sacred tongue from various denominations for peace, about peace, in peace. I was blessed with the gift of praying with Pope Francis in the most beautiful prayer for peace. The brief service was intense, intimate, soul animating and emotional. My tears joined the tears of many as the children concluded the service with a chorus of “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.” I joined all the Ladies of Charity in this prayer, that our lives and our work would be “a witness to peace.”

In Pope Francis’ words, “I trust that our presence together will be a powerful sign of our shared desire to be a force for reconciliation, peace and justice in this community and throughout the world. ... Let us implore from on high the gift of commitment to the cause of peace. Peace in our homes, our families, our schools and our communities. Peace in all those places where war never seems to end. Peace for those faces which have known nothing but pain. Peace throughout this world which God has given us as the home of all and a home for all. Simply PEACE.”



Mary Ann Dantuono awaiting the Pope's arrival at the World Trade Center.



Mary Ann Dantuono and Dr. Stephen Colecchi, Director, Office of International Justice & Peace, USCCB, proudly wore their respective pins.

Membership Committee

Continued from page 9, bottom

The committee will create a “Memory Book” to be archived as an historical document in conjunction with the 400th anniversary celebration in 2017. Members from each of the regions will be interviewed using stimulus questions developed by the committee, “Remembering our National History.” Participants will be asked to recount their personal journeys as Ladies of Charity, including the role their spirituality and knowledge of Vincentian history played in their lives. If you have a special memory or know someone who does, please call the national office at (816) 260-3533. We would love to hear from you!

Association and individual members with expertise and interest in these projects are welcome to join committee members Joan Stanard, Theresa Ward, Lucy Ann Saunders, Mary Cay Murray and Tama Dutton. This would not be a commitment to actually be on the national board but an opportunity to share your ideas and thoughts on how to strengthen membership and promote LCUSA’s past history and present story. Contact Tama Dutton at the National Service Center for more information.

Vincentian Spirit Soars

Continued from page 4

The Vincentian Gathering drove home the great and privileged work all the branches of the Family carry on. Most miraculous is that each does this with deep commitment to the poorest and with a clear grasp of our founders’ vision of simplicity, humility and charity, four hundred years since its inception. Our steady steps in collaboration move us ever closer to Saints Vincent, Louise and Elizabeth Ann.

We should assist the poor in every way, and do it both by ourselves and by enlisting the help of others....To do this is to preach the gospel by words and work. St. Vincent de Paul (xc)

On October 6, I met with members of the Vincentian Family at Mother Boniface Spiritual Center in Philadelphia. Present were members from the Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Charity, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Brothers of Charity, Congregation of the Mission, DePaul USA and Missionary Cenacle. It was the annual meeting of the Vincentian Family Leadership East (VFLE).

The meetings began as a result of the call for collaboration within the Vincentian Family by then Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney, CM. The purpose of the meeting then and now is to share information and projects while encouraging collaboration where possible. The meetings provide a wider knowledge of the projects being accomplished by Vincentian Family members. Meeting face-to-face and sharing information has enriched the bonds of the VFLE since its first meeting in 1997.

These annual meetings engage each member and afford each member the opportunity to learn about Vincentian ministries being accomplished in the eastern region of the United States. A wide range of programs were discussed at this year's meeting, such as: the establishment of homes of charity, day centers, respite care facilities as well as the global reach of the Vincentian Family ministries. Reports included information on collaborating with Family members to host a poverty simulation; plans for Denver's meeting on Systemic Change around homelessness; a safe home for victims of trafficking; formation

days for spiritual advisors; safe, stable and affordable housing for women; the Year of Collaboration in parishes and communities. Following the agenda, mid-morning was set aside for the celebration of Mass. The liturgy inspired and aroused the Vincentian charism in those present. Each member was reminded that their ministries are important, but more important are the spiritual aspects of their lives necessary to provide inner strength for those ministries. This holds true for all of us as Ladies of Charity.

When announcing the 400th Anniversary of the Ladies of Charity, there was such enthusiasm in the voices of those present. The Ladies of Charity heritage and history are amazing accomplishments to Family members. That same enthusiasm needs to be reflected by all of us as plans are made for LCUSA's special celebration in 2017. There is a statement written on a local school wall that reads, "Coming together is a beginning, working together is success. Keeping together is progress." Ladies, we have made that progress and with the help of each other and members of the Vincentian Family, that progress will continue as we go forward and keep steadfast hands in all we do for those less fortunate.

Yes, family matters and we as Ladies of Charity are proud to be the first of our Family to be asked by St. Vincent and St. Louise to serve those less fortunate. Grab the enthusiasm and reflect the joy of our heritage as Vincentian Family members await LCUSA's invitation to share this special anniversary year!

LCUSA Membership Committee at Your Service

The Membership Committee of the national board is working in a variety of ways in support of Goal Three of the LCUSA Strategic Plan, namely, "To increase membership through personal invitation and strategic use of social media."

It has already engaged the local associations in a membership drive, culminating in monetary awards to those who achieved the highest percentage of new members in the defined period. The contest was divided between associations with 200 or more members, and those with fewer than 200 members. Among the larger groups, LOC Metro Kansas City tied with LOC Buffalo, and each received an unrestricted prize of \$125.



Membership Chair Lucky Van De Gejuchte (second from the right) with representatives of the associations who were winners in the membership drive.

Holy Trinity Parish in Pittsburgh was the winner among the smaller associations, and received a prize of \$250.

Committee members are also working to promote the history of LCUSA and its Vincentian mission and international organization through social media and the Servicette and they are disseminating specific ideas on how to identify,

approach and personally invite new members. Committee Chair Lucky Van De Gejuchte presented some of these ideas at the 2015 National Assembly. (See the article "Local Associations and LCUSA Partner in Helping People Living in Poverty"

on page 11 of this issue.) Aiming to increase diversity within membership, the committee is updating materials in Spanish. It has organized information about existing Junior LOC associations and has developed material, available on LCUSA's website, aic.ladiesofcharity.us, to assist in the formation of new Junior groups.

Continued — see p. 8, top right



Far left: Ladies of Charity from Pensacola leading the procession into the opening Mass. Left: Board members are introduced to the assembly. Standing from left, Suzanne Johnson, Peggy Keene, Karen Radu, Kathleen Sieracki, Chris Young. Below far left: Waiting in line for help during the poverty simulation. Below middle: Jamila Stone addressing members at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting. Below: Margaret Hanson (L), Archbishop Gregory Aymond, and Fr. Richard Gielow outside St. Louis Cathedral



2015 National Assembly of the Ladies of Charity USA

Kathy Kavanaugh

It was a wonderfully enriching experience! Ladies from throughout the United States gathered in New Orleans Sept. 17-19 with the theme “Vincentian Women Changing Communities with Joy and Hope.” Prior to the assembly many participated in wonderful tours and ate out on the town to savor the culture of New Orleans, meet new Ladies and have a lot of fun.

The assembly was filled with inspiration and wonderful camaraderie, called in session by Mary Ann Dantuono. We were spellbound by keynote speaker Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ, with “Dead Man Walking – The Journey Continues;” enriched by the history of the Ladies of Charity as related by Sr. Fran Ryan, DC, LCUSA Vincentian Spiritual Moderator; and challenged through role-play in a poverty simulation exercise to understand the day-to-day challenges faced by many of our clients. We learned from various models of service for persons who are homeless, abused, for the elderly and those in prison, in excellent workshops. The LCUSA Board, who

met before and following the assembly, also presented “Best Practices” in a panel format with good participation from the audience.

Some changes to the national by-laws including the location of the national service center and the structure of standing committees were approved during the business session; the assembly also passed a resolution in support of Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato Si.”

Of course there is always wonderful networking going on as all associations strive to further enhance the work they are doing and bring a focus on systemic change for the people being served. Communal prayer was rich as always, led by the opening liturgy celebrated by the Rev. Richard Gielow, CM, Vincentian Spiritual Advisor to LCUSA, and concluded with Mass in the historic Cathedral of St. Louis with the Most Rev. Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond presiding.

The gala closing banquet was

filled with fun and fond farewells to some really inspiring Vincentian women and leaders and a most memorable assembly. Go on the LCUSA website aic.ladiesofcharity.us/photos/Assembly2015NewOrleans to see more pictures.

Women from the Northeastern Region presented an enthusiastic introduction to the 2016 National Assembly in Queens, N.Y., Sept. 29–Oct. 1, “Ladies of Charity, Women of Mercy.”



Natalie Boone (L) and Marge Cashin of LOC St. John's helped introduce the 2016 assembly.



Local members participating in workshops at the assembly.

Local Associations and LCUSA Partner in Helping People Living in Poverty

Christine Young

Ladies of Charity from throughout the United States gathered in New Orleans in September for the annual assembly “Vincentian Women Changing Communities with Joy and Hope.”

During the assembly, LCUSA board members formed a panel to discuss “Best Practices” and the parts we all play in carrying on the spirituality and the mission of serving the poor and those in need. As St. Vincent de Paul said when he organized the first Confraternity of Charity in Chatillon in 1617, “The poor do not suffer from a lack of charity, but from a lack of organization.”

Lucky Van De Gejuchte, a national board member and chairwoman of the membership committee, discussed recruitment strategies. “It seems like every association at one time or another needs to recruit members and being visible is critical,” she said, as she encouraged Ladies of Charity to speak after weekend Masses to tell parishes what associations do. “Include what Vincentian spirituality is and why it is meaningful.”

After new members join, it is critical to find ways to keep them. Van De Gejuchte suggests having a sponsor mentor a new member to get her involved in association activities. Have an information table available in parishes where women can sign up, or during a parish ministry fair, send notices

to church bulletins and diocesan newspapers, or in social media Webpage and Facebook; have a Lady of Charity attend a Knights of Columbus meeting and invite wives, speak to RCIA groups and invite women to meetings and to help with projects, have a grandmother-granddaughter luncheon; all are effective ways to recruit members.

Mary Ann Dantuono, LCUSA president, recently sent a letter to Congress asking them to hear the voice of the poor. The LCUSA is a volunteer network of more than 6,000 women in more than 200 communities acting together against all forms of poverty, she said. “Last year the Ladies of Charity provided over \$2 million in direct aid and volunteered almost a million (958,000) hours, a value of \$21,000,000 for our communities as we worked in soup kitchens and pantries, thrift stores and programs to support literacy and the economic empowerment of women,” Dantuono said.

For example, in Buffalo, N.Y., women volunteer their time to maintain a thrift store, assemble layettes, distribute household goods, give Christmas gifts to children and homebound adults, and are involved in programs at their parishes. In Salt Lake City, two associations share a food pantry to deliver supplemental food to 40 homes and 65 families at a parish. On one Saturday a

month they serve 30 families at the pantry. Other associations around the country organize local fund-raisers to support association activities, work with restorative justice for newly released prisoners, are active in state and federal legislative advocacy issues related to the mission, and assist pregnant teenagers and birthright centers. Activities such as these connect the network of associations.

What local chapters do in volunteer hours assists the national Ladies of Charity in being a national advocate for women in poverty and seeking grants to work with associations to assist those in need. As part of the AIC our network of assisting poor women extends to 54 countries on five continents.

Nationally the Ladies of Charity establish priorities and advocate to alleviate the dire consequences of violence and poverty. “We are concerned for women and children suffering in poverty, the frail and the elderly who have inadequate care; we must find a way to support family caregivers, share resources with migrants and refugees who flee violence and poverty, especially victims of human trafficking.”

“Our impact in this work is greater collectively than it is as individual associations,” said Dantuono. “To carry out our mission, associations require strong active members rooted in Vincentian spirituality.”

“Most importantly, be open to change and suggestions; be receptive to new members and new ways,” said Van De Gejuchte. “Nurture and cultivate new leaders.”

Dantuono encouraged all the leaders present to “let others touch your cloak” as friends, daughters, sisters and nieces; “they will be transformed by God’s love which has transformed you because of your service of people who are poor, frail or oppressed,” she said.

LCUSA Cares About Our Common Home

At the national assembly, on Sept. 20, the delegates considered and passed a resolution to support Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment. Pope Francis called for action by everyone to bring together concern for people and the planet through understanding of an "integral ecology." In his encyclical "*Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home*," the Pope assailed the consumerism and wastefulness of modern life, linking stewardship of the natural world with justice for "the poorest and most vulnerable people," and calling for a transformation of economic justice systems and political policies in order to avert environmental catastrophe. Vincentian charism calls us to study the document and engage in local and global discussion of climate change. In addition to passage of the resolution, 62 Ladies signed the petition of the Global Catholic Climate Movement. You can

add your name to this strong Catholic voice asking world leaders to drastically cut carbon emissions and to aid the world's poorest people in coping with climate change impacts. Contact www.CatholicClimateMovement.global.

Following the assembly, and in anticipation of the Pope's visit to Congress, LCUSA President Mary Ann Dantuono wrote to all United States Senators and members of the House of Representatives telling them about LCUSA activities and accomplishments and about the resolution in support of the Holy Father. She went on to say:

In the hope that Congress can work together to protect our environment, let us also work together to protect the human dignity of all who live here. We are concerned for the women and children suffering in poverty, the frail and elderly who have inadequate care and feel they are burdens. We must find ways to support family caregivers. We must also share our bountiful resources with the migrants and refugees who flee violence and poverty, especially the victims

of human trafficking.

As Ladies of Charity of the USA, we willingly respond to Pope Francis' challenge, "Among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor." (2013) May his moral leadership animate all and especially our government leaders, to govern our nation so human dignity can flourish and peace will be the legacy of justice.

In November, on behalf of LCUSA, Mary Ann Dantuono wrote to Sr. Kathleen Appler, DC, Superioress of the Daughters of Charity, headquartered in Paris, "United in our Vincentian mission and spirit, we have received word that the sisters are safe and wish to assure you that we will keep the people who died, the injured and other survivors and their families in our prayers. We will pray for all the people of France and Syria."

Quoting Pope Francis in his appearance at the World Trade Center, "give us the wisdom and courage to work tirelessly for a world where true peace and love reign among nations and in the hearts of all,"

Ladies of Charity Archdiocese of Washington 2nd Annual One-Day Retreat: "Vincentian Women Changing Communities with Joy and Hope" Viola Johnson-Robinson



From the left, Gloria Rose, Mary Hand, Beverly Motley, Bertha Guerra and Violet Johnson-Robinson reported on the 2015 assembly.

The Ladies of Charity Archdiocese of Washington (ADW) held their second annual retreat in October at the Washington Retreat House, a facility run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement located next to the Saint John Paul II Center near the Basilica of the National Shrine. One of the goals of the Planning Committee was to provide the 78 attendees with an update on the 2015 National Assembly in New Orleans. In addition to the retreat program, the committee adopted the national assembly's theme "Vincentian Women Changing Communities with Joy and Hope." The

day was filled with spiritual reflection beginning with an opening prayer by the ADW Vincentian Spiritual Moderator Sr. Sandra Goldsborough, DC, "Joy in the Journey." Mary Hand, ADW board president, introduced the day and Rita Robinson, LCUSA Middle Atlantic regional vice president, gave an overview of upcoming LCUSA events, notably the 400th Anniversary of the Ladies of Charities in 2017 and the next national assembly in Queens, N.Y. The five ADW assembly delegates, Bertha Guerra, District of Columbia president; Beverly Motley, Prince George's County president; Gloria A. Rose, Junior LOC moderator; Mary Hand, ADW president; and Viola Johnson-Robinson, ADW first vice president, gave their perspectives on different aspects of the New Orleans



Members gather for Mass during the retreat.

LCUSA Elections

2016 is an election year for the national board of Ladies of Charity USA (LCUSA). The election will take place at the national assembly in Queens, N.Y., Sept. 29–Oct. 1. The nomination committee of the existing board will present a slate of candidates for the offices of president-elect, secretary, and treasurer for the term of 2017–2018. As current president-elect, Suzanne Johnson will be the president for the same period.

Early in the year local presidents and individual members will receive a letter inviting them to consider becoming a candidate for a director position on the board. Presidents may also encourage other capable members to apply. An interested member must complete the form, “Application/Resume of Candidate for LCUSA Board of Directors.” The form was recently revised and will come with the letter or may be requested from the chair of the nominations committee. A photo and a separate description of education and professional and personal experience are also required. The application must be received by the chair of the nomination committee (Kathleen Sieracki, 246 Berryman Dr., Buffalo, NY 14226; kandrsieracki@aol.com; (716) 838-4792) by May 15. Each region has three directors, one of whom will be elected regional vice-president. Delegates to the national assembly will elect the directors and vice-president during the regional meetings held there. Directors serve a two-year term, and may ask to be re-elected three times for a total of eight consecutive years.

Potential candidates should know that the board of directors meets for three days in the spring at a designated loca-



Board members meeting at the national assembly.

tion. Additional days may also be needed for travel. Room and board is provided but members must travel at their own expense. The board also meets immediately before and after the assembly. Directors receive a handbook and are expected to be familiar with it and with the by-laws included in it. Each director serves on one or two committees and may be asked to chair one of them. Directors in each region work with the regional vice-president to communicate with local associations, engage them in LCUSA’s mission, share the excitement of serving on the board and emphasize the importance of being a part of a national and world-wide organization. The regional vice-president has some additional responsibilities to disseminate information and reports to local associations and subsequently collate their replies.

LCUSA invites each member to prayerfully consider expanding the scope of her participation in the Ladies of Charity by becoming a candidate for the national board.

REMINDER

Last spring the AIC increased dues that the national association must pay to AIC. As a result, after evaluating our budget, the LCUSA Board voted to increase the dues for LCUSA effective 2016 to \$13.00 per member. Thirteen dollars a year, of which \$4 is shared with AIC, will be the cost for each member as of January 2016 to be a part of the national and international network of Vincentian women, founded almost 400 years ago by St. Vincent de Paul, working together against poverty. Thank you for your sacrifices and understanding.

Benefits of membership include:

- ▶ Membership in the International Association of Charities (AIC), presently a network of over 200,000 women in 52 countries, the longest existing lay organization of women in the Church and the world, serving persons living in poverty
- ▶ Linkage with 64 associations and 6000 Ladies of Charity in the United States

- ▶ Vincentian Spiritual Formation though moderators trained and assigned by the Daughters of Charity and Sisters of Charity.
- ▶ Resources that help associations develop best practices in organization and service.
- ▶ Eligibility for national grants up to \$1000 for direct service and literacy enrichment programs
- ▶ Access to scholarships for the national assembly, an annual gathering that animates the Vincentian spirit, educates on Catholic Social Teaching and promotes leadership and best practices in Ladies of Charity associations
- ▶ Voting delegates at the national assembly and eligibility for nomination to the national board
- ▶ Connection with and linkage with the Vincentian Family, Catholic Charities USA, and a number of other coalitions of Catholic organizations that serve persons who are poor and vulnerable
- ▶ Subscription to the *Servicette*
- ▶ Capacity building and much more...



Pope Francis arriving at Catholic University.

A Pilgrimage to Meet Pope Francis

Continued from page 1, left

early to wait in a series of entrance and security lines. In the wee hours of the morning Pennsylvania Ave. was bustling, and there were papal flags atop every light post and building. We were given a program and papal flag as we entered the White House grounds. As the sun rose and the mist faded, we walked the lawn in the hopes of finding the best spot to see and hear the Pope and the President. We spent a few hours waiting, walking and waiting, walking and waiting, but there was such energy and enthusiasm among everyone. My mother and I mingled with others from Catholic Charities and visited with friends from our dioceses, institutions of higher educations and a number of religious communities. Certain customs were observed during the honors; the national anthems of the Holy See and the United States were played, and then President Obama and His Holiness Pope Francis spoke to the assembled crowd.

Once the arrival ceremony was over, my mother and I walked to the National Press Club for lunch with others from the CCUSA contingent and we were able to watch some of the coverage on television. We were later picked up by bus for the Canonization Mass at the National Basilica on the campus of Catholic University. Once we were screened, we walked to the entry point with our "gift bag" which included a Mass program, a holy card, a biography of Junipero Serra and some information on the National Basilica. It was incredibly moving to see so many people lined up along the street,

and once we were inside the secured area, to see all the people in attendance. There were many families—some sitting on blankets, some standing and some who had reserved seats (folding chairs). I was struck by the number of young people around me. If anyone thinks that the young have left the Church, or they have become disenchanted, I would disagree. I encountered many young seminarians and college students during the afternoon. Similar to our experience on the White House lawn, there was a lot of waiting and walking, and while my mom and I were doing that, we talked to a lot of different people from all over the country, from all kinds of backgrounds, who had traveled very far and were full of hope and joy to be present that day. While we had seats very close to the altar, on the left side, we couldn't actually see the ceremonies, but were able to watch on the jumbotron. One of the good



Lady of Charity Gloria A. Lessington (R) was among people lining the streets to greet Pope Francis.

Continued — see p. 18, A Pilgrimage

One-Day Retreat

Continued from page 12

assembly. Lucy Saunders, LCUSA past president, served as the panel moderator and provided a slideshow of assembly photos downloaded from the LCUSA website. The assembly update ended with a DVD produced by Viola Johnson-Robinson's daughter featuring scenes from the assembly accompanied by a jazz rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In."

The retreat was facilitated by Sr. Ellen LaCapria, a Daughter of Charity for nearly 40 years. She has an art therapy graduate degree and has held a number of diverse positions including facilitator for Mandala/Prayer workshops and Art/Spirituality retreats and she has created Vincentian-centered works of art. Now involved with her most important work as caregiver for her mother, Sr. Ellen introduced the ladies to "What is a Vincentian Heart?" Attendees were encouraged to examine their hearts about what motivated them as Ladies of Charity. They were provided with the humanistic factors in their lives that affect the way they view others through the lens of St. Vincent and St. Louise. As Ladies of Charity who follow the virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity, those present were asked to consider how they could create a balance in their lives.

The retreat culminated in the inaugural Mass of the ADW's new Spiritual Advisor, Rev. Philip Simo, OSB. Participants in the Mass included organist, Sr. Maggie Scally, DC, and representatives from Prince George's County, Joyce Dews and Deborah Self; Charles County, Judy Fisher; Calvert County, Susan Wilson; Montgomery County, Mary Louise Hand, Maryann Rooney and Judith Strenio; District of Columbia, Linda Jenkins and Pamela Johnson. Behind the scenes with their special contributions of gifts and talents were Toni Gaines, Gloria Lessington and Mary Ann Tretler. The contributions of so many made for a very spirit-filled retreat and a special day.

Introducing Ann Clark— Leading the Ladies of Charity of Frankfort, Ind. as they Celebrate 50 Years of Faithful Service

The first 18 members of the Ladies of Charity (LOC) at St. Mary's Church in Frankfort, Ind. were invested on Oct. 6, 1966. Three of the original group are still living. Part of the North Central Region of LCUSA, the group is looking forward to celebrating its 50th anniversary next year. Kay Metzger was the founding president, succeeded by Sharon Gildersleeve. Current president Ann Clark joined LOC 20 years ago and has been leading the association of 32 women since 2010. She retired in 2005 after a long career as an elementary school teacher, the last twenty-five years working with second graders. Since she had been widowed 10 years earlier, Ann decided to devote her energy to her parish. In addition to her leadership in the Ladies of Charity, Ann is a song leader, a lector, a catechist, in involved in the RCIA program and



Ann Clark is president of the Ladies of Charity in Frankfort, Indiana.

takes Communion to homebound parishioners. She has two married daughters and seven grandchildren ranging from age one to age 18.

Embodying the corporal work of mercy, Bury the Dead, the Frankfort Ladies of Charity have an active ministry to the bereaved. They cook and serve dinners following all funerals held at St. Mary's and also make Mass offerings for each of the deceased. Communal prayer is also very important to them. At each monthly meeting, they pray for the ill and deceased and for priests. They also recite the Charity, Humility and Simplicity Prayer which has a special meaning to all Ladies of Charity. (Laminated copies of this prayer may be ordered at no charge from LCUSA. From the website, aic.ladiesofcharity.us, select Resources/LCUSA Supplies/LCUSA Prayer Card.) Following the meeting,

Continued — see p. 18, Introducing

Support from the United States Coast Guard

by Rita Robinson

In support of the Ladies of Charity at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church (OLPH) in Washington, DC, Coast Guard Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Jonathan Schaffer, community affairs officer and liaison to the District of Columbia, and Art Brown, deputy chief of staff, delivered food to their pantry in September. Members of the Ladies of Charity and friends help to unload the food, stock the shelves, and make it ready for distribution.

The goal of the Coast Guard's community relations program is to foster positive relationships within the communities where they live and work. The Coast Guard, located in Ward 8, also the location of OLPH, is reaching out and looking for ways to support and to become actively involved in community activities. LCDR Schaffer is the primary coast guard officer to interface with the District of Columbia. Deacon Timothy Tilghman, retired Coast Guard, played an instrumental role in the selection of the site for food distribution.

The Ladies of Charity at Our Lady of Perpetual Help wel-



From left, Deacon Timothy Tilghman, Mid-Atlantic Regional V.P. Rita Robinson, Coast Guard LCDR Jonathan Schaffer and Lady of Charity Gladys Reid were present for the food delivery.

comes the opportunity to interact with and build community involvement with the Coast Guard in Ward 8.



Linda Mahoney(R) helping a family choose coats at the Coats for the Community event in Albany, N.Y.



Funded by a grant from LCUSA, Junior Ladies of Charity individuals.



Ladies of Charity in Buffalo, N.Y. gathered for a Day of Reflection in October.



The Ladies of Charity of St. Louis held the Kathy Coco Memorial Walk in September. Proceeds benefit their food pantry.



The Nashville Ladies of Charity. Read the story.



ity in Lancaster, N.Y. created sixty Blessings Bags for homeless



Carol Huffman of Utah purchased a Cajun themed nativity set while touring a Louisiana plantation prior to the national assembly.



Los Angeles (left) and Santa Barbara (right) both invested new members in September.



Ladies of Charity and their Fall Consignment Sale in Nashville were reported in The column at <http://t.co/C2SrGvwKYO>.



Over \$10,000 was raised for the Ladies of Charity of Perryville, Mo. by the Night of Thunder classic car show fundraiser.

MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

Both the persons named below and the donors will be remembered at a special Mass said by LCUSA's national spiritual advisor, Fr. Richard Gielow, CM. Please send your donation with the identifying information to the National Service Center.

Memorial and Honorary Remembrances Links to the Mystical Body of Christ

Dear Ladies of Charity,

Each time I receive a list of names for special remembrances, I offer Mass for them. Following the Mass, their names are placed in the chapel of the Vincentian Parish Mission Center in Independence, Mo., where we resident priests pray for them throughout the year.

It's important to remember those who have died as well as those who are in need of special prayers due to illness or tragedy. Our prayerful remembrance links us as one in the mystical body of Christ. We are always united in prayer.

So rest assured that when a Lady of Charity requests a memorial for a loved one, it is taken very prayerfully and the perfect gift of a Mass is offered for the intention.

God bless you all.
Rev. Richard Gielow, CM
National Spiritual Advisor

† MEMORIALS †

In Memory of

Zeta Allen

Kaela Allton

Regina Cutter

Agatha George

Jim Gorman

Donald L. Hoefer

Norma Keleher

Edna "Roby" Robson

Ann Steck Tyhe

Judith Ferrara Wesley

Bequeathed by

Betty Wasielewski

LCUSA Board

Gayle Johnson
Suzanne Johnson
Joan Stanard
Lucky Van De Gejuchte
Theresa Ward

Mary Beth O'Brien

Gayle Johnson

Lois E. Hoefer

Theresa Ward

Geoff Riordan

Gayle Johnson

Lucy Ann Saunders

† IN HONOR OF †

Albe McGurk

Kathleen Sieracki

Joan Ward

Sr. Chris Diensberg

Introducing Ann Clark



Frankfort Ladies of Charity at a recent meeting.

the members divide into groups and visit four area nursing homes, taking gifts of cookies and flowers. They then return to the church for fellowship. Once a year the Ladies sponsor a "Senior Saints" event, which includes Mass, lunch and entertainment for people age 80 and older.

Memorial donations and free will

Continued from page 15

offerings from the funeral dinners are the income sources for the association. They donate each year to the Madagascar twinning project and have sent a cookbook as a silent auction item for the last several assem-

blies. Ann sometimes uses the Servicette as a resource at meetings, including a recent article on Madagascar and Bishop Zubik's "Ten Tips to Greater Joy."

The group welcomed five new members this year and they have faith that women will continue to join in their mission and thus maintain and improve the Frankfort Association in its second 50 years.

A Pilgrimage

Continued from page 14

things about that particular location was our proximity to the "religious" section. There were many different communities of men and women present-a variety of colors and vestments-some of which I had not seen before. We were able to see the Pope enter the grounds in the pope-mobile, as well as the bishops' procession and recession through the crowds. The music reflected the diversity present, blending African American, Latin and traditional liturgical hymns. We sang in a number of languages. The Litany of the Saints during the Canonization part of the Mass highlighted all of our American saints.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be present with so many other pilgrims to greet the Pope in our nation's capital.



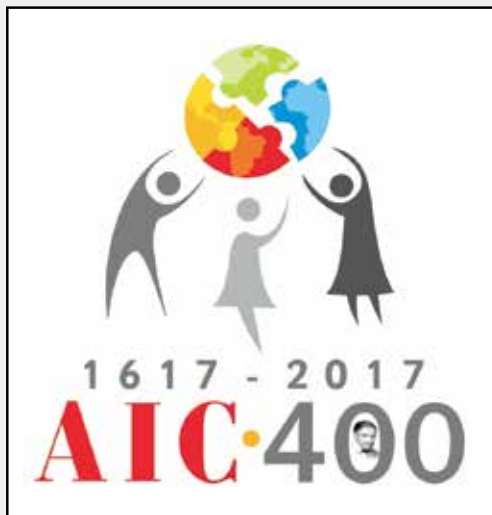
From the left, Gayle Priddy, Patricia McKinley (behind Gayle), Nancy Bennett, Sr. Lee Ann McNally, Joan Finnegan and Sharon Shields at fundraiser for the Center for Women in Transition

The Ladies of Charity in Little Rock, Ark., had a busy October. They hosted a bake sale featuring traditional and seasonal homemade goodies along with arts and crafts. Proceeds will support their projects, including help for homeless people; art camp for children whose parents are incarcerated; baskets for babies, given to mothers and infants who are homeless or have disabilities; and the Founders Fund which helps applicants with rent, utilities or medication.

Several Ladies and their spouses attended “Amazing Journeys,” a fundraiser for the Center for Women in Transition. Established in 2005, this program provides services to women in prison, focusing on relapse prevention, anger management, re-entry issues, life skills and surviving abuse, whether domestic, physical, substance or sexual. Some funds are available to meet basic needs upon release and the Center provides a place for women to find and understand themselves and feel secure. Outgoing director Sr. Lee Ann McNally, RSM, was honored for her work.

Journey to the 400th Anniversary

As we enter the 399th year of the life of the Ladies of Charity, we look forward and back examining our history and mission. The AIC Secretariat



has been circulating a redraft of the “Basic Document.” We have been sending these monthly to the Presidents in the “President’s Postings.” There are three chapters with very short reflections. We invite your reading of this document and your thoughts. The documents can be accessed on the LCUSA website at <http://aic.ladiesofcharity.us/reflections-on-the-aic-charter/>



Dates to Remember

- **January 23–26, 2016**
Catholic Social Ministry Gathering
Washington, D.C.
- **January 28–31**
Vincentian Family Collaborators Action Program
Philadelphia
- **February 16**
Association/Individual Annual Reports due to Regional V.P.s
- **March 1**
Dues Notice, Dues Payment and Membership List due to National Service Center
- **March 15**
Feast of St. Louise de Marillac
- **March 15**
Deadline for Hager and JLOC Grant Applications to National Service Center
- **April 20–24**
Spring Board Meeting,
Evansville, Ind.
- **May 24, 2015–May 15, 2016**
(Pentecost to Pentecost)
Year of Vincentian Collaboration
- **September 29–October 1, 2016**
LCUSA National Assembly
Queens, N.Y.

As the Christmas season comes to an end, here’s a litany called “*Now the Work of Christmas Begins*” composed by Howard Thurman, an African-American theologian, educator, and civil rights leader.

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

Wishes for a new year of peace created though our work for justice and loving service of people in poverty.

Ladies of Charity USA
100 North Jefferson Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63103
Address Service Requested



<http://aic.ladiesofcharity.us>

“To serve rather than to be served”

Catherine O'Regan Harkins-Drake USA Foundress

Carol Schumer, D.C.

Without a doubt, the introduction of the Ladies of Charity into the United States ranks as a miracle of God's providence, with St. Vincent de Paul as catalyst. In 1857, at the age of twenty-three, after vivid dreams, Catherine Harkins initiated the first society. Today we marvel at what her willingness to follow this divine invitation has birthed, i.e., 6,000 Ladies located in 21 states and the District of Columbia serve persons living in poverty in 68 associations.¹



Born in 1834 on Irish soil, Catherine was welcomed into the O'Regan family who then immigrated to the United States and settled in Pennsylvania. Here she attended a school run by the Sisters of Charity from Emmitsburg, Md. From them, the young girl learned about St. Vincent and his ministries of charity. At 19, she married Hugh Harkins, a Mississippi steamboat operator. The couple moved to St. Louis, Mo. in 1857, and registered at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, another step of God's plan.

Later that year, in three nightly visions, Catherine saw Vincent trekking through snow to gather needy children under his cloak. She chose to share these startling experiences with two Vincentian priests who served in her parish. Father Urban Gagnepain, CM, heard her account with keen attention and urged her to pray and assemble a group of women to assist impoverished persons, assuring her “If the work is not of God, it will not progress.”²

Catherine responded and on Dec. 8, 1857, 12 members came together to form the premier association of the Ladies of Charity. Serving as president, Catherine led the group in

helping many starving people destitute due to the depression caused by the panic of 1857. Together with Vincentian priests and Daughters of Charity, their food distribution expanded. Their outreach widened to support orphans, senior citizens and destitute families, namely those most indigent. Catherine was also committed to the development and education of young children, having mothered three of her own. When her husband died, she poured herself into her charity work.³



By 1893, many Ladies in the original group had died and the need to reorganize was evident. Father Stephen Huber, CM, was the prime initiator of this renewed vigor. In the 1860s, the Ladies became associated with the recently established Guardian Angel Settlement, directed by the Daughters of Charity. Due to this involvement the efforts of the Ladies became known throughout the region. New associations sprang up and area-wide membership increased to over 1,200.⁴

In 1884, Catherine married Elmer Drake while maintaining her zest for ministry to those who were poor. Her three offspring, Hugh, Urban and Marie Harkins,⁵ gave her 18 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She worked tirelessly until her death in 1911. However, Catherine's legacy lived on in the associations and in her family, as Marie Harkins, following in her grandmother's footsteps, served as president of the LOC for 19 years and continues in us, over 100 years later.

Reflection: Do I/we listen to God's invitation to explore new and unexpected endeavors?

¹ LCUSA brochure 2011 <http://aic.ladiesofcharity.us/files/2011/01/LCUSA-Brochure-2011-web.pdf>

² Frances Ryan, DC, <http://www.aic.ladiesofcharity.us/files/2012/02/Catherine-Harkins-Drake1.pdf>

³ Betty Ann McNeil, DC http://famvin.org/wiki/Vincentian_Women_of_Faith_and_Mission

⁴ John Zimmerman, CM, homily (unpublished), 11/27/1982, DePaul University: LCUSA Archives, pages 1-8

⁵ Obituary: Catherine Harkins Drake, 1911, DePaul University Special Collections, Ladies of Charity (LCUSA-AIC archives)